

Loudoun County

Department of Health

"Working to ensure and improve the health of the residents of Loudoun County"

Vol 1 No 1

Summer 2001

Spotlight on Our Staff...

David Goodfriend, MD, MPH
Director

"The mission of the Loudoun County Department of Health is to help our residents attain and achieve optimum health. We do this through a variety of programs that, for example, help ensure that your favorite restaurant's food is safe to eat, that your community pool is safe to swim in, or that your neighbors' septic systems will not fail. We also do this by helping babies to be born healthy and planned, by working to keep your children safe from vaccine-preventable illnesses, by promoting and facilitating increased health screenings, and by investigating emerging diseases, such as Lyme disease and West Nile virus, as they occur.

The goal of our new quarterly newsletter is to bring public health and prevention information of importance to the residents of our Loudoun County community. I invite you to share our newsletter with those you feel would benefit and hope you will let me know how we may improve future issues to better meet your needs."

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Spotlight on Our Staff
- 1 Preventing West Nile Virus
- 2 Bike Safety
- 3 Secondhand Smoke and Children
- 4 Each Year at the Health Department
- 4 How to Reach Us

PREVENTING WEST NILE VIRUS

West Nile virus was first reported in the United States in New York City during the fall of 1999. By the fall of last year, seven crows had tested positive for West Nile virus in Virginia and we expect to see positive birds in Virginia much earlier this year, with increased risk to Loudoun residents and domesticated animals.

West Nile virus is spread to people and animals by a bite from a mosquito. Since there is no vaccine, the best way not to get sick is to avoid mosquito bites.

Tips to eliminate mosquito breeding sites:

- ✂ Get rid of old tires or drill holes in them.
- ✂ Clean roof gutters and downspouts.
- ✂ Empty birdbaths once a week.
- ✂ Turn over wading pools, garbage can lids, and wheelbarrows.
- ✂ Re-grade drainage areas and clean out ditches.

Tips to prevent getting stung by mosquitoes:

- ✂ Wear insect repellent when outdoors.
- ✂ Wear long sleeve shirts and pants.
- ✂ Stay inside at dawn and dusk.
- ✂ Repair holes in screens.

For more information:

Contact Doug Hubbard or Loudoun County Department of Health staff at 703-777-0234 or call Cooperative Extension Service at 703-777-0373. Additional information is available through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm and from our website at

www.co.loudoun.va.us/general/wnvirus.htm.

BIKE SMART!!

Bike riding is both fun and a great way to exercise. But it also can be a risky activity. In 1997, 813 persons were killed and 567,000 persons went to the emergency room as a result of bike crashes in the United States. Nearly one-third of bike-related deaths and two-thirds of injuries were among riders under age 16.

Head injuries are the leading cause of death and disability in bike crashes. However, wearing a bike helmet reduces the risk of brain injury by as much as 88%. Helmets reduce the risk of injury to the face by 65%.

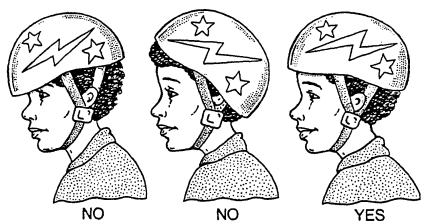
Unfortunately, **only about 25% of children aged 4-15 years wear a bike helmet. Teen use of helmets is nearly zero.** The main reasons children don't wear helmets are:

- they aren't "cool",
- their friends don't wear them,
- helmets are thought to be uncomfortable (usually too hot), and
- parents or the child never knew how effective helmets are in preventing head injuries.

When choosing a helmet:

- ✓ Buy a bike helmet that meets the national safety standards.
- ✓ Get one that is the right size.
- ✓ Make sure it sits on top of the head in a level position.
- ✓ It should not rock back and forth or side to side.
- ✓ Adjust the straps for a snug and comfortable fit.

Always keep the helmet straps buckled when riding.



Source: National Safe Kids Campaign

Bike Safety Tips

You greatly reduce the chances of having a bike-related injury if you follow these simple tips.

Always wear a bike helmet. Think of a bike helmet as a necessity, not an accessory.

Follow the rules of the road. Bicycles are considered to be a vehicle and must **obey the same rules as cars.**

- Ride on the right side of the road with the traffic flow, not against it.
- Obey traffic signs and signals.
- Use correct hand signals.
- Stop at all intersections and crosswalks, both marked or unmarked.
- Stop and look both ways before entering a street.
- Do not ride in a motorist's blind spot.
- Yield to pedestrians and skaters.
- Always ride single file.

Be Alert

- Be aware of pedestrians.
- Watch the road for potholes, manholes and storm drains.
- Do not wear headphones.
- Use a basket or rack to carry items.



Be Visible

- Wear bright clothes to attract attention.
- Use reflectors and lights at night.

Bike Size

- It is important the bike fit the rider, **do not buy a bicycle to "grow into"**.
- With both feet on the ground, there should be 1-2 inches of clearance between the rider and the crossbar.
- The rider must be able to grip the handlebars while seated.
- While seated on the bicycle, the balls of both feet must be able to touch the ground.

Secondhand Smoke and Children

Children are more susceptible to the effects of secondhand smoke than adults because their lungs are still developing. Secondhand smoke is a mixture of smoke given off by the burning end of a cigarette, pipe or cigar and the smoke that is exhaled from the lungs of the smoker.

Home is the most significant place of exposure for children because of the amount of time spent at home and because of progress made towards instituting smoking bans at school, daycare facilities and other public places. Fifteen million children are regularly exposed to secondhand smoke in the home.



Health effects from secondhand smoke include:

- ❑ **Lowering lung efficiency**, resulting in inflamed airways and increased mucus production. Children's smaller airways are more sensitive and more likely to result in wheezing or coughing. Lower respiratory infections such as bronchitis and pneumonia are a common result.
- ❑ **Inflammation of the tube connecting the nose to the middle ear (eustachian tube).** Swelling blocks natural drainage and fluid buildup in the middle ear leads to an increase number of ear infections.
- ❑ **Triggering an asthma attack** or may cause healthy children to develop asthma.
- ❑ **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)**, the cause of which is not completely understood, has been associated with maternal smoking. Two times more infants of women who smoked during pregnancy die from SIDS than infants of women who did not smoke. Recent studies suggest that exposure to secondhand smoke may increase an infant's risk of dying from SIDS.

Childhood Asthma Epidemic

- ❑ Asthma is a chronic lung disease characterized by wheezing, coughing, chest tightness and breathlessness.
- ❑ It is a leading cause of children being absent from school.
- ❑ It is also a leading cause of hospitalizations for children.
- ❑ Up to six million children in the United States have asthma.
- ❑ The number of children with asthma has nearly doubled over the past several years.
- ❑ Secondhand smoke is a known trigger of asthma.
- ❑ Up to one million children with asthma have their condition made worse when exposed to secondhand smoke. They have more attacks and these attacks are often more severe.

Goal: Increase the number of homes with children aged six and under where smoking is not allowed.

Eliminating Children's Secondhand Smoke

Make yours a "smoke-free" home

- ❑ Ask that smokers only smoke outside.
- ❑ If a family member insists, ask that he or she open a window and smoke in rooms not frequently used.
- ❑ Let your policy be known. Post your "nonsmoking" magnet on the refrigerator and don't put out the ashtrays.
- ❑ Do not smoke if children are present.
- ❑ Do not smoke in the car where space is extremely small and concentrations of smoke can be very high.
- ❑ Take the "Pledge to Make Your Home Smoke-Free" by calling 1-800-513-1157 and receive a free kit.

Please call the Loudoun County Department of Health at 703-777-0537 or the American Cancer Society at 703-938-5550 for information on quitting smoking.

Each Year at Your Health Department

Each year the Environmental Health staff:



- ✓ Issues 636 sewage disposal system permits.
- ✓ Approves 1,104 wells.
- ✓ Evaluates 1,560 subdivision sites for well supply and septic systems.
- ✓ Conducts 1,700 restaurant evaluations for food safety.
- ✓ Responds to 600 urban complaints.
- ✓ Issues 600 permits for temporary events such as fairs.
- ✓ Investigates 350 dog bite complaints.
- ✓ Diagnoses 108 animals for possible rabies.

Each year our Health Clinic has 16,800 visits. Some services include:



- ✓ 737 pediatric visits.
- ✓ 1,275 maternity visits.
- ✓ 5,454 immunization visits.
- ✓ 2,238 family planning visits.
- ✓ 3,602 tuberculosis tests.

Loudoun County Health Department
1 Harrison Street, SE, Second Floor
Leesburg, VA 20177
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Health Department Information

Loudoun County Department of Health (703) 777-0234

David Goodfriend, MD, MPH, Director

e-mail: dgoodfri@co.loudoun.va.us

Environmental Health Division (703) 777-0234
1 Harrison Street, SE, Leesburg

Health Clinic (703) 777-0236
102 Heritage Way, Leesburg

Please Visit Our New Web Sites on the Internet:

Virginia Department of Health: <http://www.vdh.state.va.us>

Loudoun County Department of Health:
<http://www.co.loudoun.va.us/depts/health.htm>



Additionally:

- ✓ 9,693 visits from WIC participants for nutrition education and healthy food.
- ✓ 1,300 home visits for family planning, maternity, post-partum, pediatric, and communicable disease cases.
- ✓ Dental services to 871 patients.